

When Online Faculty Meet in Person: The CATS program

The Jefferson College of Population Health develops online faculty through a systematic program of course authoring and teaching support known as 'CATS'. Comprised of both online and face to face meetings with College administrators and faculty, CATS program activities culminate each fall and spring term with a working dinner held on campus—the CATS dinner. At these events program-level meetings held with Program Directors in the late afternoon lead in to a meeting of the whole conducted over dinner to address a selected general theme.

In recent years, the dinner's themes have included the role of virtual office hours in online environments, options for enhancing online lectures, and the use of grading rubrics online. Importantly, these CATS dinners also provide an opportunity for online instructors to share experiences and learn what is working for other instructors while coming together in person with administrators to discuss College news.

At the latest February gathering, the faculty were joined by Dr. Juan Leon, Director of Online Learning, Dr. Billy Oglesby, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs, and Dr. David Nash, the Dean of the College of Population Health. After updates from Dean Nash on strategic planning and opportunities afforded by the merger with Philadelphia University, Dr. Leon highlighted successes program graduates have had with their Capstone Projects, and he explored with the group the various ways online



Photo by Lisa Chosed

instructors can provide the 'rich feedback' to students that supports that success.

The faculty in the room, as well as those participating via web conference, broke off into separate groups to discuss individual approaches to providing feedback to students and implementing workable methods for any challenges they come across in their classes. Dr. Oglesby concluded the evening explaining plans for redevelopment of certain courses to accommodate students wishing to move more quickly through the online curriculum.

All in all, these sessions end up being professionally enriching for the faculty and administration due to the exchange of ideas, and the opportunity to have some social engagement with each other outside of the semester-to-semester responsibilities.

In addition, the future of CATS will be an attempt to bring together all on-site faculty with the instructors who teach primarily online. The goal will be to encourage all instructors to more effectively utilize online educational technology across the College.

Lisa Chosed, MA

*Assistant Director, Online Learning
Jefferson College of Population Health
Lisa.Chosed@Jefferson.edu*

Juan Leon, PhD

*Director, Online Learning
Jefferson College of Population Health
Juan.Leon@Jefferson.edu*